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TAGS: [BK](#) [KIRF](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [HR](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: HOLY SEE MAKES POINT ON BOSNIA'S CATHOLICS

REF: A) VATICAN 533; B) SARAJEVO 2738

CLASSIFIED BY: Peter Martin, Pol/Econ Chief, Vatican, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

FM Calls in Ambassador

¶1. (SBU) On the heels of Poloff's meeting with Vatican Balkans Director Monsignor Miguel Maury (ref a), Holy See FM Giovanni Lajolo called in the Ambassador November 14 to deliver an aide memoire (complete text faxed to EUR/WE, DRL/IRF and EUR/SCE) on the situation in Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH). The document expressed the hope that an "equitable and stable solution" could be found for BiH that would not "discriminate against Catholics living in the country."

¶2. (SBU) The Vatican also passed a copy of the BiH Bishops Conference platform for constitutional reform in the country (ref a), and urged that the voice of the Catholic bishops be "listened to and taken seriously." The aide memoire said that the bishops had "objectively" explained a situation in which Catholics in BiH did not enjoy the civil rights of other citizens and were being "induced to leave their land of origin."

It ended by emphasizing that Pope Benedict was "concerned" about the "serious situation" in the diocese of Banja Luka "where only ten percent of the 150,000 Catholics living there before the war returned, on account of the precarious social, economic, and security situations." The Vatican cited the November 2004 assassination of Monsignor Kazimir Visaticki of Bosanka Gradisa, who had "publicly denounced the situation" one week earlier, as a "particularly serious and worrisome" sign.

Comment

¶3. (C) Balkans Director Maury had been passionate in discussing the "plight" of BiH Catholics in a meeting with Poloff November 11, and likely decided to make it clear that he had the backing of his superiors by getting the FM involved. Lajolo's office accented the importance it places on the issue by calling us to arrange the Ambassador's appointment on Saturday November 12, while the Ambassador was still in St. Peter's Basilica following his credentials ceremony with the pope. The aide memoire's specific mention of the pope's concern about the situation was also a significant point. As the Holy See MFA is normally quite judicious in calling in the Ambassador, it is clear that the Vatican feels very strongly about this issue.

ROONEY